

VZCZCXR05572
RR RUEHPA
DE RUEHAB #0458 1251417
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 051417Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1269
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 000458

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2016

TAGS: PGOV IV

SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT BEDIA: EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Classified By: AMBASSADOR AUBREY HOOKS FOR REASONS 1.4. B/D.

¶1. (C) Former President Henri Konan Bedie, who was ousted in a coup in 1999, has little strategy for negotiating an end to the political crisis in Cote d'Ivoire beyond demanding that the international community assume responsibility for security and for organizing new elections. He recognizes that it is unlikely that elections will take place in 2006, and insists that the international community remove President Gbagbo from power and replace him with a neutral figure for a transition period, much as his party had demanded in 2005. During their hour-long meeting on May 4, the Ambassador stated that the international community, while already deeply engaged in the peace process, would not impose a solution in Cote d'Ivoire which at any rate would not work in the long run. Furthermore, if elections cannot be organized in 2006, it is more likely that current arrangements called for in UNSC Resolution 1633 would be extended by a few months. Bedie countered that Cote d'Ivoire will never get to elections as long as Gbagbo remains in power.

¶2. (C) In a similar vein, when the Ambassador noted the absence of a genuine consensus among political actors on moving ahead on the operational aspects of the political process (demobilization, identification, integration of the military, and voter registration), Bedie countered that a consensus already existed; the FPI (President Gbagbo's camp) just has to stop blocking the process and the Forces Nouvelles rebels had to comply with their commitments. The Ambassador commented that the various blockages President Bedie referred to suggested that there was no real consensus. The Ambassador also inquired about Bedie's efforts to unite the opposition. President Bedie argued that his PDCI party headed the united opposition; other parties had to follow the PDCI lead. (Comment: As the leadership of almost all the opposition parties were at one time associated with the PDCI during its one-party rule, Bedie looks upon other parties largely as illegitimate children, a patronizing view that is hardly appreciated by other parties.).

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Bedie's attitude is not significantly different from that of most political actors in Cote d'Ivoire, including President Gbagbo, in that they all hope that the international community will intervene decisively in a way that will favor their own position, thus obviating the need for negotiations and painful compromise. Opposition leader Alasane Ouattara insisted on the same points as Bedie during a recent meeting with the Ambassador; Ouattara added a further demand by insisting that the international community canton the military forces of Cote d'Ivoire (FANCI) until after elections. This attitude on the part of the political class suggests that a fundamental consensus on moving toward elections and reconciliation is still lacking, and that will translate into prolonging the current crisis.

Hooks